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Keep Saddam's Oil Lines Closed, Retiring CIA Director Warns

By RUTH SINAI

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Iraqi President Saddam Hussein remains firmly in charge of his country, and the United States must keep his oil pipelines closed in order to weaken his grip on power, says the retiring director of the CIA.

William Webster also says the United States is skeptical that Saddam has any intention of fulfilling his promises to share power and bring about other democratic reform.

Taking his leave of reporters who covered his four-year tenure, Webster said in a wide-ranging interview Thursday that he didn't see "anything in hindsight that suggests" Saddam would have pulled his troops out of Kuwait unless the allies had forced him out militarily.

Removing Saddam himself from power was not a U.S. goal, he said.

"Saddam Hussein is still very much in charge," Webster said. He has surrounded himself with those he can trust and has begun rebuilding his country's devastated infrastructure, he said.

Iraqi society has become so "subdued" under his repressive rule that even the punishment inflicted by the massive allied bombings of Iraq didn't force the population of Baghdad into the streets to remove Saddam, Webster said.

Two groups which did rebel - the Kurdish minority in the north and the Moslem Shiites in the south - were brutally repressed.

The only leverage the United States and its allies have to remove Saddam is to withhold oil revenues that he could use to buy influence and rearm in the future, Webster said.

"It will require a continued concerted policy of the coalition members to encourage those things that would remove him," he said.

"Without that, I think he'll stay there" as he has since taking power in 1979, Webster said.

Webster said he was concerned that allied policy might be eroded by pressure from Iraq's neighbors to reopen the two oil pipelines through which Iraq was able to export most of its oil until its Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia, through which the pipes pass to sea terminals, turned off the oil flow to punish Iraq for the invasion.

A U.N. resolution adopted April 3 to establish a cease-fire with Iraq prohibits resumption of the oil flow until the Iraqis destroy all their arsenals of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

But Webster said he was concerned that Turkey, Saudi Arabia,

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Kuwait and other countries might seek the pipelines' reopening so they can collect the reparations they're entitled to under the cease-fire resolution.

U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar is expected to set ceilings soon for the percentage of future Iraqi oil profits to be used for compensation claims.

Claims are expected to cover personal losses and injury, loss of wages for thousands of foreign workers who fled after the invasion, damages for the burning of hundreds of Kuwaiti oil wells and pollution in the gulf.

U.S. officials say Iraq should pay 40 percent to 50 percent of its future oil profits to compensate victims.

Third World diplomats favor a figure of 5 percent to 10 percent, allowing Iraq sufficient revenue to rebuild its infrastructure.

Western diplomats say about 25 percent would be appropriate because that is the amount - about \$8 billion a year - Iraq used to spend on arms purchases.

Iraq's creditors don't want the figure to be so high because they want to be repaid some of the \$80 billion Iraq owes abroad.